

(June 1992)

Summary of recent action taken on situation in Algeria

Letters written by the Secretary General of the Islamic Council, Mr Salem Azzam on 8 June 1992 to:

Mr Ian Martin, Secretary General, Amnesty International;
Lord Avebury, Chairman, Parliamentary Human Rights Group;
Mr Ken Coates, Chairman, Subcommittee on Human Rights, European Parliament.

The letters expressed concern that the trials of the FIS leaders and others due to begin on 27 June would not conform to internationally accepted norms of justice and asked if the respective organisations could send observers to attend the proceedings.

Mr Ian Martin replied that Amnesty were planning to send a lawyer to observe the trials.

Lord Avebury wrote a strong letter to the Algerian Ambassador to London asking for many assurances concerning the legal proceedings. Eg, whether the defendants can choose their own lawyers freely and have unrestricted access to them; if they have been notified of all charges against them; whether they will have the right to cross-examine prosecution witnesses; if the trials will be in public with access to journalists, etc. He told the Ambassador that he needed to make this information available to his colleagues in Parliament (some 150 members of the human rights group) and in Congress and other legislatures.

Lord Avebury also wrote to the Director of the Congressional Human Rights Foundation in Washington, asking him to take similar action.

Mr Coates replied that he is trying to organise an observer to be sent from the European Parliament.

On 16 June, Mr Azzam wrote to Mr Mohamed Boudiaf, Chairman of the Higher State Council in Algeria, asking him to call off the trials, release all political detainees, close all detention camps, to encourage a positive dialogue among all political parties, including FIS, and to hold free and fair elections.

A Press Release was issued on 18 June giving details of Mr Azzam's letter to Boudiaf and of the other actions mentioned above.